

NEWS from



Bill Postmus
Supervisor, 1st District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 29, 2001

Contact: Brad Mitzelfelt
(909) 387-4830

OP-ED or Letter to the Editor:

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT ON THE 'MORNING-AFTER PILL'

By Bill Postmus
County Supervisor, First District

I have received comments from many people regarding the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors' attempt to exclude the so-called "morning-after pill" from the list of federally funded low-income contraceptive assistance provided in County Health clinics.

While the overwhelming majority of communications I've received have been in favor of the Board's action of February 27, there have been some who have objected to it. I believe some of those objections have been based on a misunderstanding of the Board's action or intentions in this matter.

The reason I made the motion to exclude the "morning-after pill" is because our County Counsel informed the Board that the California courts have established that any contraceptive services provided with government funds cannot exclude treatment of children, even in cases when the children's parents have not consented to nor been notified of the treatment.

I felt, and the Board voted 4 to 1 in agreement, that parents ought to be involved when their daughters may be pregnant and seeking such treatment, especially when it involves powerful prescription drugs with potentially dangerous side-effects. The morning-after pill is basically a mega-dose of birth control pills. While there is some debate over whether the pill actually ends an early pregnancy or prevents one from occurring, the issue still remains that children

-MORE-

are being given powerful prescription drugs without the consent of their parents.

Based on clinical experience, the most commonly reported side effects of the pills are nausea and vomiting that may last up to two days. However, other more serious side effects may also occur. Serious risks which can be life threatening include blood clots, strokes, and heart attacks—risks that increase with patients who smoke cigarettes.

If our schools can't even give aspirin to a student without parental consent, why should this be different? I believe parents have a right to know when their children are being given prescription drugs, especially contraceptive services that signal a variety of issues parents—and in some cases the criminal justice system—should know about.

Now, having made my position on parental consent clear, this issue is now out of our hands. It will soon be at the doorstep of the Bush Administration, in particular the Secretary of Health and Human Services, Tommy Thompson. Secretary Thompson must decide whether to allow San Bernardino County to receive the \$457,722 in Title 10 funds for family planning services to low-income county residents while excluding the morning-after pill.

If the Administration says “no,” the pill will continue to be fully available. That provision is the result of a board action that I opposed. If the administration says “yes,” it would go a long way toward signaling to state and local governments across the nation that the new Administration respects their needs and desires and will not dictate how local communities spend taxpayer dollars. Our county will have made a difference in starting the process of rolling back federal micromanagement of local problems.

Some reporters have asked me the question: “Why now? Why are you trying to undo this when it’s been going on for several years now?” The answer to that question is simple. Since taking office a few short months ago, I have made it a priority to let the new Administration in Washington know that local communities know best how to manage our public business, from social services to the use and stewardship of our public lands.

I believe that with a new Administration we have a real opportunity to return more local control to our county and we would be remiss not to take advantage of it.